

75 Great Ideas for Your Neighborhood Commercial District

1. Be enthusiastic about your organization and get your friends involved!!!
2. Form a working board and committees to implement your organization's plan of action.
3. Thank volunteers over and over again!
4. Hire a director to help coordinate the activities of your organization. Establish an office in a central location of the business district.
5. Beat the streets...know your constituents, and keep them informed! Find out the needs of your businesses by communicating with them on a regular basis. React with appropriate projects.
6. Publish a newsletter to keep primary stakeholders and others in the community informed about your progress.
7. Recognize a volunteer of the month in your newsletter or the local newspaper.
8. Develop a work plan for the upcoming year that clearly defines your organization's mission, goals, projects, and specific tasks. Develop a timeline and budget for each task, and delegate the projects to specific individuals. Develop a budget for your organization based on this work plan.
9. Hold a town meeting. Identify commercial district priorities by building consensus.
10. Join the National Main Street network. The current cost is \$195 per year. For information, call (202) 588-6219. This is a benefit provided by DC Main Streets.
11. Train your volunteers. Develop a short training session, and provide them with information about the organization, appropriate news articles, your work plan, etc. Develop volunteer job descriptions.
12. Establish a close working relationship with the DC Marketing Center, the DC Chamber of Commerce, the DC building Industries Association, and other community or business development organizations. Coordinate a monthly lunch meeting for the executive directors of all of these organizations to touch base and stay informed about each others activities.
13. Hold a fund raiser for a specific commercial area project.

14. Educate various stakeholder and community groups about the importance of the commercial area.
15. Throw a party to bring people together. Tell them about your organization.
16. Hold town meetings. Show some of the Main Street slide shows or videos available from reSTORE DC.
17. Create a brochure to explain your revitalization organization. Emphasize the importance of volunteers to the effort.
18. Organize a youth advisory board to tap into students' viewpoints about the neighborhood business district, increase your volunteer pool, and provide an educational opportunity for area youth.
19. Sponsor monthly "coffee breaks" for merchants to talk about commercial area revitalization activities and issues that affect them. Rotate the location among businesses.
20. Take a field trip to other communities that have implemented successful commercial revitalization programs or projects.
21. Put together a slide show highlighting your organization's accomplishments for presentations to community groups.
22. Create an instantly recognizable logo for your organization that symbolizes your commercial area. Make sure the logo is easy to use and will be able to meet various graphic needs.
23. Build a strong relationship with the area news media. Make it easy for them to cover your stories.
24. Install quality "welcome" signs at the entrances to your neighborhood business district.
25. Hold an annual cleanup day with the assistance of volunteers and community groups. Make it fun! Also develop an ongoing maintenance program.
26. Initiate preservation planning, including application for status as a Certified Local Government (CLG). Seek assistance from the DC Office of Planning's Historic Preservation Office at (202) 442-8818.
27. Photograph your commercial area buildings now. Building rehabilitations can best be promoted with before and after photos.

28. Develop design guidelines for appropriate commercial area building renovation projects.
29. Participate in Historic Preservation Week held every May. Call the National Trust for Historic Preservation at 202-588-4296 to get a packet of information about the event.
30. Create incentive programs for building renovation projects. Grant and loan programs have been used successfully by many communities.
31. Coordinate a walk through the neighborhood business district. Identify “problem areas” that need attention.
32. Spruce up...plant flowers, clean the alleys, sweep the streets, pull the weeds.
33. Encourage business owners to change their window displays frequently, and to light them at night. Sponsor a window display and interior merchandising workshop.
34. Put attractive displays in vacant windows. Local organizations, school classes, your local historical society, or other businesses may be very willing to help.
35. Establish a banner program.
36. Target some realistic facade improvement projects in the early stages of your program.
37. Put together a commercial area “sign squad”. Remove signs and the supporting hardware (brackets etc.) that no longer serve existing businesses.
38. Sponsor design workshops to educate building owners, contractors, and volunteers on appropriate building improvement projects.
39. Assist business owners with appropriate signage and awnings. Include signage and awning sections in your design guidelines.
40. Develop an architectural awareness contest that draws attention to the commercial area’s historic assets.
41. Save an endangered building!
42. Pass a preservation ordinance for the neighborhood commercial district.
43. Complete an inventory of your streetscape amenities, such as trash receptacles, benches, street lights, and trees. Develop a plan for future improvements.

44. Showcase a recent facade and interior renovation. Provide a tour of a quality interior remodeling or upper floor residential conversion. Publish a photo of a quality facade renovation in the local newspaper.
45. Create a people place — a park or children’s play area—in the commercial area.
46. Produce a historic walking tour and brochure to promote the area’s history.
47. Assess parking that serves the commercial area. Encourage business owners to leave prime spaces for customers.
48. Toot your horn often... promote your success!
49. Coordinate an image development promotion or campaign that promotes your commercial area’s strengths and assets.
50. Encourage community groups to work with your organization in scheduling their events to occur in the commercial area—generate customer traffic.
51. Plan and then publish a calendar of events for your business district.
52. Develop a weekly newspaper column or radio show dedicated to your revitalization program.
53. Invite citizens to teach a craft or hobby in the commercial area.
54. Involve children (tomorrow’s customers) in revitalization activities by providing them with activities that help them understand the importance of the neighborhood commercial district.
55. Have a parade!
56. Hold a street dance!
57. Make sure your events are listed in all local, regional, and statewide listings and tourism publications.
58. Work with merchants to create retail promotions that make cash registers ring.
59. Coordinate an exciting holiday promotion to bring people to the commercial area!
60. On a designated evening or Sunday afternoon, have merchants fix simple hors d’oeuvres to serve in their business.
61. Develop a business directory with a map to help visitors and local people find what they are looking for. Business directories also call attention to the wide

variety of retail businesses, services, professional and government offices that the area has to offer.

62. In the summer, show movies on the outside of a building.
63. Schedule performances by local artists and musicians.
64. Hold a treasure hunt.
65. Sponsor an advertising and marketing seminar.
66. Conduct a market analysis to better understand your customers and to help identify their needs. Gather census information on your community and trade area. Also, conduct “focus groups”.
67. Meet with area realtors. Let them know what Main Street’s goals are, especially in relation to commercial properties.
68. Stay informed. Budget for professional development opportunities, such as commercial revitalization conferences. Develop a library with commercial revitalization information that can be used by volunteers, businesses, and the community in general.
69. Complete an inventory of buildings and businesses in the commercial area. Include size, ownership, cost to rent, and availability.
70. Encourage businesses to extend store hours so employees can shop on their way to or from work. Establish uniform hours for stores in the commercial area.
71. Develop educational programs to address the needs of businesses.
72. Get information out about free or low-cost business assistance that could benefit the commercial area business owners.
73. Stay on top of commercial property vacancies. Be prepared to share information about them with business prospects. Use your completed market analysis to develop a business retention, expansion, and recruitment strategy.
74. Renovate upper floors of buildings for housing services, or office space.
75. Send copies of event posters, brochures, photos, slides, newsletters, and other things you’ve been successful with to *reSTORE* DC at 441.4th Street, NW, Suite 1140 North, Washington, DC, 20001. We want to include your revitalization successes with others. And, there are so many opportunities for us to do this— when making slide show presentations, at workshops, when responding to resource library requests, and during telephone consultations.